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ABSTRACT

For 2 years, at least 2 days a week were spent by a researcher in observing, through the actions of the principal, the dynamics of cultural and ideologic conflict and the process of social control in an elementary school. This personal account analyzes the principal's use of corporal punishment, symbolized by the paddle, and positive reinforcement, symbolized by the pencils awarded to good students, to achieve discipline and cultural hegemony in the school. After a narrative description of the principal's interactions with students, staff, and the researcher during a single day, the principal's use of corporal punishment during different years is explored as well as his rationale for using corporal punishment, his negative view of the students and their parents, and his attitude toward black students. Numerous direct quotes are included. Next, the principal's practice of awarding a pencil to exemplary students is reviewed and the ineffectiveness of the principal's use of "two pieces of wood," the paddle and the pencil, to establish cultural hegemony is analysed. (18 references) (CLA)

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Two Pieces of Wood:
Symbols of Control

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Paper Presented at the Meeting of

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Two Pieces of Wood:
Symbols of Control

The purpose of this paper is to present a critical ethnographic account and analysis of one elementary principal's use of the paddle and the pencil to achieve social control within the school. The two pieces of wood become powerful symbols representing key ideological themes. The following vignette, "Two Pieces of Wood," is an account of one day. The vignette along with additional data from the two-year ethnographic study of this principal are analyzed and critiqued in the subsequent section, "Symbols of Control."

The position taken in this study is that schools are culturally constituted, and that maintaining the culture of the dominant social group is the most profound effect of schooling (Bates, 1981; 1985; Bourdieu, 1971). Cultural patterns of the dominant group, presented by the school through the hidden or implicit curriculum became second nature, regulating processes of thought, language and behavior without being consciously apprehended.

Schools are not monolithic representations of the culture of the dominant group (Fine, 1986); they are cultural battle grounds on which contending dominant and subordinate ideologies compete for control (Bates, 1985; Bernstein, 1976; Bowles and Gintis, 1976; Hamilton, 1980). In order for the dominant group

to maintain control in the schools, the cultural and ideologic conflict must be obscured from view (Femia, 1981). Complete control is never fully achieved. The dominant group can not simultaneously exclude, deprive and mistreat subordinate groups and fully assimilate them into its affirmative consensus (Femia, 1981).

The work of Gramsci (1971, 1973) provides a frame for the analysis of social control. He contrasts domination with hegemony. Domination is social control achieved by influencing behavior and choice externally through coercion. Hegemony, on the other hand, refers to social control achieved through influence, leadership and consent. Consent is largely obtained, Gramsci contends, through the leadership of organic intellectuals in strategic social institutions such as schools, universities and the media. Organic intellectuals (e.g. school teachers and administrators, university professors, journalists, civil servants, business managers and technicians) fulfill an ideologic and cultural purpose in society by serving the interests of the dominant social group. It is their responsibility to weave the culture and ideology of the dominant group throughout the social fabric.

The work of school administrators and teachers is critical in the achievement of hegemony. This paper examines the work of

one organic intellectual, an elementary principal who seeks to produce hegemony within the school. It focuses on the interactions of the principal as he attempts to influence children of subordinate social groups to accept the culture and ideology of the dominant group.

Methodology and Data Scources

This study is a critical ethnography. Anthropological, qualitative, participant-observer methodology is used to understand the complexity of the everyday social interaction of actors within the school. Consent for the ethnographic study was obtained from both the principal and central office administration. Code names are used to protect the anonymity of participants. For two years, the researcher spent two or more days each week in the focal school as participant observer. She shadowed the principal during his daily routine, serving as a quasi-assistant to him in order to "get inside" the role as he defined it. The researcher assisted teachers, clerical staff and parents and worked with students. She observed classes, attended various parent, teacher and administrator meetings, collected documents, and conducted extensive interviews with the principal and other administrators, teachers, students and parents. In addition, the researcher participated in various social and ritual functions.

The understanding of interactions in the school is located

within the theoretical frame of Critical Theory. Social reality is viewed as subjectively constituted. Individuals' understandings are located within the context of external manipulative structures which constrain, distort and repress individual understanding, communication and action. This study addresses the dialectic between individual and group behavior and broader historical, social, economic and political structures. The intent is to reveal macro structures which substantially influence the world views of individuals and groups, setting limits and conditions on experience in the micro setting (Angus, 1986).

A growing body of literature reflects the use of the qualitative methods to examine principals' interactions within the school. This paper extends the current research on educational administration by specifically examining one principals' use of corporal punishment and positive reinforcement to establish discipline in the school. In addition, this research draws from Gramsci's (1973, 1971) work to explain the work of the principal as an organic intellectual seeking to establish hegemony in the school. In this regard, the principal and the school are lenses to view the dynamics of cultural and ideologic conflict and the process of social control.

Two Pieces of Wood

It was a cool, crisp October afternoon. I was conscious of the autumn colors of the trees that fringed the parking lot and noisy children on the playground. I glanced up to read the sign over the main entrance: Sky Haven Elementary School. Signs of autumn were visible inside, too; pumpkins and witches created by small hands were displayed by classroom doors.

It was my second month of observation at Sky Haven. The discomfort of not really belonging was beginning to wane. I drew a deep breath as I pulled open the office door.

"Hello, Sharon!" Helen Tanner greeted me from her desk facing the doorway. Helen, the school secretary, bubbled a warm welcome to everyone who entered, large or small. This short, round, red-haired, freckled woman was a curious contrast to her boss across the office from her.

There stood Leonard Ford, principal, a big man, over six-feet tall. His sports jacket and tie seemed less congruent with his manner and speech than the western boots and belt buckle he also wore. I smiled remembering the small, African-American child who told me, "Mr. Ford look jez lak Presdent Reagan." Ford was propped against a file cabinet, within easy reach of the intercom and master clock. This was a favorite vantage point for Ford to survey the hustle of activity in the control center of the school.

"Hello, Sharon!" His words were punctuated with gulps of coffee from the mug in his hands. "Would you like a cup of coffee?"

"No, thanks," I answered as I chose a seat with a clear view of both the outer office and Ford's private office. "I seldom drink coffee."

"You don't drink coffee! You know schools run on tears and coffee," Ford teased. "If you don't drink coffee, you'll have to cry more."

"I'm sure I can manage that!" We laughed. "What's on your schedule this morning, Leonard? Do you have time to talk?"

"Sure, Sharon. Come on in." Ford led the way into his office. I was fascinated that this man regularly had or made time to talk with me. Clearly, he loved talking and enjoyed an audience.

The school nurse had privately expressed concern that Ford might starve to death. She laughed at my astonished expression and explained, "He goes into his song and dance every time he opens the refrigerator door and the light comes on. He's such a showman, he forgets to eat!"

I supposed that the isolation inherent in his position as elementary school principal was compounded by the recent separation from his wife. At any rate, Ford was ready to talk and I was eager to listen. He sat at his desk, pulled out the

bottom drawer to serve as a footstool and leaned back in his chair. I sat across from Ford, tape recorder and note pad ready. "What shall we talk about?" he asked.

"The last time we talked, you mentioned that there were several changes you felt needed to be made in the school when you arrived. How did you establish your priorities? What were the first things you tackled?"

Ford grinned. "Well, I made a list -- it was a long one -- of everything that needed to be changed 'round here. Then, I prayed over it. Well, then, I threw that list up in the air. Everything that stayed up was God's responsibility and everything that came down was my job to do. So, I picked up that list and got started."

We laughed. I tried to formulate another question to get the interview back on track, but Ford continued.

"You know, Sharon, I used to be a pastor. Well, in a way, I still am. God's given these people to me, I'm responsible for them. These kids and teachers are my congregation. This school is my church."

"Mr. Ford!" A small African-American boy burst into his office. "A girl up on a ladder in our room. She screamin' and Miss Yates cain't git her to come down."

Ford responded quickly. He stood. Reaching to the top shelf of his bookcase, he grasped a wooden paddle and concealed

it in the right sleeve of his jacket. Now armed, Ford was ready to face the situation.

The boy and I jogged to keep pace with Ford's long strides, the thud of his boots echoing through the halls. My mind raced as fast as my feet. In two months of observations I had not yet seen the paddle. Why? And, why did Ford feel he needed it now?

When we arrived at Miss Yates' classroom, she was obviously disturbed, waiting at the door. Her third graders sat quietly. This African-American teacher and her class of African-American students seemed immobilized. They simply stared in disbelief at the small, Euro-American girl standing on the third rung of the step ladder, screaming. "Who is she?" Ford asked. "She's one of Mrs. Farley's," Yates whispered.

Ford moved with authority across the room to the ladder. Standing behind the girl, he slipped his arm around her waist and lifted her from the ladder. Ford carried her, still screaming, arms and legs thrashing forcefully, to the hall. He put her down and, without a word, shook his right arm. The paddle slipped into his hand. He gave her five quick, hard swats. There was no visible change in the girl's demeanor. Forcibly grasping her upper arm, he led her still screaming through the long hallway and up the stairs to Mrs. Farley's special education classroom. Ford opened the classroom door, pushed the child inside and released her arm. She was quiet, now. Farley met Ford at the

door. He briefly recounted the story.

Ford and I walked in silence toward his office, his face grim. The halls were filled with teachers and noisy children returning from recess. I rehearsed the questions I would ask as soon as we were back in his office. Had anyone noticed the child was missing from her classroom? Why hadn't it been reported to the office? Why was no one searching for the child? Why didn't he speak to the girl about her behavior? Why did he choose to paddle her rather than use some other means of correction? Why did he paddle her in the hallway instead of the office? Why was the ladder left standing in a classroom of children?

"Mr. Ford!" Joan Smith interrupted my reflection. Ford had brought this African-American fourth-grade teacher with him from Riverside School. Obviously he respected her. "I have a couple of boys I want you to meet."

"Bring 'em on in," Ford responded without stopping. I followed him into the office. I wanted to observe, but not intrude. Where should I position myself? As I sank into a chair in the outer office, I heard Ford replace the paddle on the shelf.

Smith and two African-American boys entered the outer office. "Mr. Ford?" He met her at the door of his office. She handed him two discipline forms. "You already know Andre." She pointed at a chair in the outer office and Andre sat. "This is

Orlando. He just came to Sky Haven yesterday from the city."

"Come on in, Orlando." Ford closed the office door. Smith returned to her classroom, leaving Andre, Helen Tanner (the secretary) and me sitting in uncomfortable silence. In less than three minutes Ford opened the door. As Orlando left, Ford concluded in a mock African-American vernacular, "I don't know how you behaved at your other school, but you're not gonna act like that here! Ya hear?" Orlando nodded as he started back to his classroom.

"Andre! Come in." Andre started for his door.

"May I come in, too?" I asked. Ford nodded. I sat across the office from the desk where he sat. Andre stood between us. Ford spoke with quiet intensity. Andre did not respond. Their eyes were fixed on each other, glaring. I read both fear and defiance in Andre's eyes. The uncomfortable silence seemed interminable. Finally, Ford stood and reached for his paddle. He tapped the paddle twice on the surface of his desk. Andre understood the unspoken cue. He leaned over to place his hands where the paddle touched the desk. Ford took a long, deep breath, drew back the paddle, exhaled and struck five sharp swats. I recognized the pattern; it was the same rhythm he had used earlier when paddling the girl in the hall (slow, slow, fast, fast, slow).

Ford placed his hand on the boy's shoulder guiding him

around to face him. Andre turned, his eyes downcast. Ford placed the paddle under his chin and lifted his face until their eyes met. The man towered over the boy. Their stance and eyes communicated more than Ford's intensely quiet words or Andre's silence.

I tried hard to attend to Ford's words, but the event triggered an involuntary emotional response in me. My mind began to juxtapose images of Ford and Andre with scenes of masters and slaves from books and movies.

Why did I respond so intensely? I had witnessed corporal punishment before. As an elementary teacher I had even paddled a few students. Was it because Andre was African-American? I had only seen Euro-American principals and teachers paddle Euro-American students.

"Mrs. Anderson," Ford's words interrupted my preoccupation. Andre was gone. I had missed the conclusion of that scene. I attributed it to my inexperience as a researcher. The next scene was beginning. Determined not to make the same mistake twice I pressed the record button on my tape recorder.

Each day one classroom teacher was scheduled to bring a "Good News Student" to the office to meet the principal. Today it was Margaret Anderson. The Euro-American, first-grade teacher guided a small African-American girl into Ford's office. "Mr. Ford," Anderson began. "I'd like you to meet Shamarla."

Shamarla was wearing a crisp, blue dress with matching hair ribbons. Her wide eyes shined.

Ford began, once again imitating African-American vernacular, "Just sittin' around. Not much ta do, today. Wonderin' if we were goin' ta have any good news. Sure hope we could have some good news."

"This young lady," Anderson explained, "has been such a good worker since the first day of school. She comes to school prepared. She's ready to work. She brings her homework everyday. I don't think we've had one day without smiling. Have we, Shamarla?" Shamarla smiled and nodded. "Her behavior is good," Anderson continued, "never had her name on the board one time. She's working real hard."

"First grade and done all that good?" Ford responded. "That's fantastic. Because you've done all this to help us, we gonna give you something to say thank you for being a good helper and good worker and having such good behavior. This certificate says you've been selected as the 'Good News Student of the Sky Haven Elementary School.' I sign it, date it right here. When you get old like Mr. Ford and have a bunch of grandkids, you can say, 'Mr. Ford gave me this when I was a little-bitty first grader.' You going to keep it that long?" Shamarla nodded. "Good," Ford continued. "You might want to keep it in a frame. See up there?" He gestured in the direction of his awards

displayed on the office walls. "People put 'em in a frame. You can put 'em in the Bible at home, in a safe place and stick 'em up on the wall. Where do you think you might put yours?"

"I don't know," Shamarla mumbled.

"You don't know?" Ford responded. "Alright. Now, your mom or dad home? Anybody at home?" Shamarla nodded. "Who?"

"Both," she whispered.

"Both of 'em there layin' around," Ford remarked. "What's your phone number?"

Without hesitating, Shamarla answered, "555-9047."

"You know what I wanna do," Ford explained, "is call home and tell 'em that you were good news. Would you like me to do that? We'll call and tell them and see if they're home. 555-9047? What your mother and dad's name? Last name?"

"Stevens."

"Stevens, huh? Your mom and dad still together?" Ford dialed the phone, but there was no answer. "They must be gone shopping. They're not home. What do you think? They might be home later? Well, I'll try to call 'em, but if I don't get to talk to 'em, can you tell 'em why you got this? You go home with this and you give it to your mom or dad and you say, 'I've got somethin' here.' An' they say, 'What have you got, girl?' What are you gonna say? Huh? What are you gonna tell 'em? Why are you in here?"

Shamarla sat erect. "Because I'm a good student."

"Shamarla Stevens," Ford paused. "Do you have a brother here?" She nodded. "Was he in to see me the other day? In trouble or something?" Shamarla nodded, again. "He was? Well, I tell you, I think we have the good one right here, then." Ford handed her a pencil with the inscription, "Good News Student -- Sky Haven Elementary School." Ford explained, "That's a piece of wood. It's a pencil. Mr. Ford got two pieces of wood. You saw the other one a while ago, didn't you? Up in the hall?" Shamarla nodded, her eyes wide. "You won't ever have to have that piece of wood, will you?" Shamarla slowly shook her head. "You just keep comin' down with good news and we'll give you that little piece of wood. OK. Congratulations for being good news. You keep up the good work."

"She's a good student." Anderson took Shamarla's hand. "Thank you, Mr. Ford."

"Thank you, Mrs. Anderson." (Ford shifted back to Standard English.) We were about ready for a little good news. Well Sharon, this day's about over. It's time to dismiss."

"I have a lot of questions, more questions than answers."

Ford laughed. "Bring 'em tomorrow. We'll try again." He left to supervise the walker dismissal and loading the buses. I was alone in his office.

I reached for the paddle on the shelf. It seemed big and

awkward in my hand. On his desk was a shiny, red good-news pencil. I picked it up. In my hands I held two pieces of wood, two cogent symbols of Leonard Ford's principalship. The implicit messages of those two pieces of wood seemed somehow more complex than he perceived.

Symbols of Control

At Sky Haven School, the paddle and the pencil came to represent key ideological themes; they were powerful symbols of Leonard Ford's efforts to achieve social control. Only Leonard Ford paddled students. Only Leonard Ford awarded good-news pencils to students. Final authority for judging the actions of individual students resided in the principal who dispensed these two pieces of wood.

Ford's Use of Corporal Punishment

Although I had been observing Ford for two months before I saw him paddle a student, I soon understood that Ford made frequent use of corporal punishment as a consequence for student misbehavior. During September and October 1985, Ford's secretary reported to the Glenwood School District Security Office (each school reported monthly as required by board policy) that twenty paddlings had occurred at Sky Haven School. The principals of the thirteen other district elementary schools reported a combined total of five paddlings. Ford had paddled four times as many students as the other thirteen principals combined during

the first two months of school. Ford's frequent use of the paddle contrasted sharply with international, national and local trends of declining use of corporal punishment. (See Farley, 1978; Maurer, 1977; Rule & Zoekler, 1977.)

Ford and I talked about his frequent use of the paddle during the early months of his principalship at Sky Haven. He explained that it was a difficult school. He compared it with Riverside Elementary School where he had served as principal for twelve years before he was reassigned to Sky Haven this term. His words revealed a sort of principal bravado about his ability to handle tough schools (see Anderson, 1987).

> Riverside was the armpit of the district. But, Sky Haven. Well, if you take both armpits, move 'em to the center of the back and slide 'em down, then you get Sky Haven. I have to get control. (Fieldnotes, November 13, 1985)

From this and other similar statements, I concluded that Ford believed use of corporal punishment would enable him to obtain immediate control. I expected to see a significant decline in the frequency of paddlings once he felt he had control of the school.

Analysis of records, however, revealed that during the 1985-1986 school year Ford paddled the fewest number of students in September, five. He paddled the largest numbers of students in December and March, twenty-one and twenty, respectively. A

total of 121 paddlings were administered by Ford that school year, 57% more than the fourteen other district elementary principals combined.

During his second term (1986-1987) as principal at Sky Haven, Ford again paddled the fewest number of students in September, two. The highest number of students were paddled in February, twenty-eight. Ford administered 87 paddlings that year, 78% more than the fourteen other Glenwood elementary principals combined.

Since the records did not reveal a consistent decline in the number of paddlings Ford administered at Sky Haven each month, I inferred that corporal punishment was not used temporarily by Ford to obtain control of a dysfunctional school. I requested and received copies of the district's 1984-1985 discipline records. That was Ford's twelfth (last) year as principal of Riverside Elementary School. The fewest number of paddlings were administered in December, none. The highest number of paddlings were administered in March, twenty-three. (May and June were not reported.) Ford paddled 73 students that year, 42% of the total number of paddlings at the eighteen district elementary schools.

Ford's Defense of Corporal Punishment

The dominant ideology Ford presented in the school incorporated themes from religious fundamentalism and cultural traditionalism. God, family, nation, hard work, law and order are central to his system of beliefs. (See Apple, 1989.) A conservative Christian lay minister, Ford routinely quoted the traditional maxim, "spare the rod and spoil the child." Ford felt that corporal punishment was the only method of correction for many of his deprived students. In fact, when teachers explored other means of dealing with misbehavior, Ford strongly recommended paddling as indicated by his advice to one of his special education teachers, Karen Johnson.

> You ladies don't need to try any of that "when you're angry, you're not angry at Mr. Ford, you're angry at yourself" stuff. Connie (the guidance counselor) tried to give him a pillow to hit. Just bring him up here and let me bust his butt. That's all he understands. (Fieldnotes, September 25, 1986)

Ford consistently communicated to staff members his view that the paddle was a means of helping students. For example, when Connie Meyer, the school counselor, designed a contract for Julie, a first grader with behavior problems, Ford responded:

> If you can't help her, I may have to. It's a good thing I know where the directions are - - on the bottom (laughs).

(Fieldnotes, November 7, 1986)

The theme that the paddle was used to help students was also apparent in Ford's contacts with students.

> Juarez, we don't aim to put up with all this garbage comin' out o' yo' mouth. I can't help you with what your brain does, but I can help you with your behavior. (Juarez received the usual five swats.) (Fieldnotes, November 17, 1986)

In his interactions with parents Ford routinely justified his use of corporal punishment as a means to "help" students and "work with parents," as revealed in his interaction with Ron and his mother.

> Ron is sitting in the outer office. He is an African-American fourth grader who has been repeatedly sent to Ford for discipline. Ford picked up Ron's discipline referral form from his in-box and sat at his desk to read:
>
> > During recess today Ron called Quinita "Mother Fucker," "Asshole," and "Bitch" - - without provocation from Quinita. Ron also made derogatory remarks about Quinita's mother, saying "Your mother has a glass behind with tubes coming out and doo doo stains all over it." Several students witnessed this filth.
>
> The form is signed by his classroom teacher.
>
> Still sitting at his desk, Ford calls to Ron in the

outer office. Ron stands next to Ford, holding tightly to the edge of the desk. Ford speaks with quiet force. "You've been at it, again. What's goin' on with you - - talkin' about doo doo and stuff? How are you gonna stop it?" Without waiting for a response from Ron, Ford continues, "You're the only one who can stop it. You have the key to your mouth. It's in your heart. If you think those things in your heart, you're gonna say them. You have to stop thinkin' it."

Ron is quiet. He stands motionless, still clinging to the edge of Ford's desk. The boy's eyes are fixed on the principal.

"I'm gonna call your mom." Ford picks up the phone and dials. "Mrs. Munson? This is Mr. Ford, up here at Sky Haven School . . . . I'm sorry to bother about Ron, again, but he's having trouble with his mouth . . . . He has a quick temper and a sharp tongue . . . . Generally, unless the teacher hears it or the student admits it, they usually handle it on the playground . . . . I'm sure you're trying. It's frustrating. You talk to him before school and here it is 2:30 and he didn't even make the day . . . . Which do you think would help it the most - - a paddling or a suspension? Ron said a paddling . . . . I'll try to work with you because you've tried to work with me. I'll do

whatever you'd say . . . . Hopefully, we can work with a child. First, we warn 'em. Then, we paddle 'em . . . . Well, I thank you for your support. I'll paddle him and send him back to the room . . . . OK . . . . Well, I told you the last time you was up, I'd try to work with you. . . . Bye."

At last, Ron speaks. "What'd she say?"

"She said to spank your little behind. What do you think of that?" Ron does not answer. He stares at the floor.

"OK, Ron. We're gonna do what your mama says will help you." Ford reaches for the paddle on top of the shelves. He uses the paddle to indicate the places on the desk where Ron is to put his hands. He paddles Ron with five swift, hard swats in the familiar rhythm.

"It ought to end. Right?" Ford's volume increases steadily. "It must end. It will end!"

Ron is crying, now. Ford puts his arm around him, but Ron jerks away. Ford guides him into a chair in his office and busies himself with paper work in the outer office until Ron is quiet. Then, Ford moves him to the outer office.

Ron is still near and hears Ford remark to me, "He really is a defiant little booger. His mother doesn't show an interest in him. It's all talk. She just wants him at

school. Her commitment gave way to convenience."
(Fieldnotes, May 27, 1987)

In this instance, Ford implied in his conversation with the mother that he had given Ron a choice of receiving a paddling or a suspension and that Ron had chosen to be paddled. On the basis of this information, the mother agreed to permit Ford to paddle Ron. In actuality, Ford did not discuss alternatives to corporal punishment with Ron. Ford misled the mother in order to gain her approval, despite his strong religious values. In addition, Ford told Ron that his mother said to "paddle your little behind," giving the child the impression that his mother had chosen the punishment. Ford successfully created the illusion that child and parent had chosen, when Leonard Ford was the only one who had power to define and choose among alternatives in this situation.

Ford told Ron, as he commonly advised students, that he was the only one who could control his behavior. Ford's actions, however, contradicted this statement. Using corporal punishment, a coercive form of external control, is inconsistent with his stated belief that behavior is self-controlled and intrinsically motivated.

Ford did not consistently talk with students about their behavior when punishing them. Ford stated that it was a "waste of time" to try to reason with some students. Presumably, he

felt it a waste of time to try to explain the dangers of running away from her classroom or climbing a ladder to the special education student he paddled in the hall, without speaking to her. Such actions reveal a lack of respect for students' abilities to direct their own behavior despite his stated beliefs.

His apparent disrespect for students was also revealed in name calling (e.g. "defiant little booger"). His imitation of African-American vernacular speech in interactions with students provides additional evidence of his condescending view of African-American language and culture.

Not only did Ford believe students were unable to discipline themselves, he condemned the incapacity of their parents to control them. Ford regularly exhibited a negative view of the parents of his students.

> The parents aren't goal oriented, structured. They're basically unstructured, no sense of direction . . . . They are loosey goosey. Loosey is spelled L-o-o-s-e-y. (Fieldnotes, June 11, 1987)

In his conversation with Shamarla, the good-news student, Ford expressed the view that parents were lazy ("Both of 'em there layin' around"). This statement may also have had a sexual connotation as did his reference to attractive, young, African-American mothers as "hot mamas." Ford's presumption

that most of his students experienced unstable family situations was revealed when he asked Shamarla if her mom and dad were still together and when he doubted Mrs. Munson's love for and commitment to Juarez.

Ford saw poor behavior in the school as the failings of individual students, their parents and environment. Leonard Ford, however, claimed order in the school as his own personal achievement.

Discipline was Ford's first priority in the school. "You can't teach 'em anything, until you've got strong discipline." The paddle, then, represented the strong discipline Ford sought to achieve by inflicting physical pain through legitimated violence.

Ford's Use of Positive Reinforcement

The pencil represented Ford's efforts to promote obedience and docility through the use of positive reinforcement. He awarded one pencil to a "Good News Student" each day, approximately 175 pencils each year. In his two years as principal of Sky Haven, Ford awarded about 350 good-news pencils. In comparison, he administered, according to official documents, 209 paddlings.

Although he distributed more pencils than paddlings, the pencils did not seem to make the same strong impact as the paddle to students. I routinely overheard students speak in hushed

tones about a student who had been paddled. I never, however, heard students speak enviously or admiringly of a student's good-news pencil. Perhaps the difference in impact had something to do with the relative size of the two pieces of wood. More likely, it resulted from students' fear of visiting the principal's office.

Even Good News Students seemed reluctant to visit Ford's office to receive their awards. Perhaps it was because the presentation consistently included an implicit threat. The pencil was never awarded without a reference to "Mr. Ford's other piece of wood." The pencil, then ultimately came to symbolize its opposite: the paddle. Both were potent instruments of his authority and control.

The Contradictory Power of Symbols

Farber (1969) developed the metaphor of the "student as nigger" to explore the theme of social control and authority in education. On the plantations, slaves were commonly sorted by the master. The uppity and rebellious were beaten into submission, controlled through coercion. The "Uncle Toms" learned to please the master, to smile and shuffle in his presence, to wait for permission to speak. The reward for demonstrating their willingness to remain slaves was to be chosen as "house niggers."

The "Uncle Toms" were controlled through hegemony. Hegemony

offers the more powerful form of social control (Gramsci, 1971). Because of hegemony, slaves "wear their chains willingly. Condemned to perceive reality through the conceptual spectacles of the ruling class, they are unable to recognize the nature or extent of their own servitude" (Femia, 1981, p. 31).

The master/slave approach, like Freire's (1973) banking concept of education, discourages children from questioning, exploring, constructing meaning from their own experience. Truth is received by reason of authority. Students are vulnerable and increasingly dependent on educators; they become "authority addicts" (Farber, 1969).

The parallel is clear. Leonard Ford sorted his students into groups. He paddled students who were resistant, coercing them into submission. Among the students he paddled, Ford showed the least regard for the special education student he paddled publicly (in the hall) without speaking to her. He showed more respect for Ron and Andre. They were paddled privately in his office and he communicated with them regarding "proper" behavior.

Orlando represents the largest group of students in the school. He did not receive a paddling or a pencil, but Ford communicated with him regarding acceptable behavior.

Ford demonstrated the highest regard for Shamarla, the good-news student. He presented a pencil and certificate to her and spent considerable time praising her behavior and talking

with her. The good-news students were, to use Farber's (1969) metaphor, "Uncle Toms" or "house niggers;" they consented to subordination.

Although Ford treated students differentially, a condescending view of all students was pervasive in his interactions. He either did not speak to students at all or communicated in a mock African-American vernacular. He reserved use of standard English for interactions with adults. Although there was a status difference among groups of students in the school, a greater status difference existed between Ford and all students.

The ideology of the dominant social group which Ford represented presented a strong we/they opposition. (See Apple, 1989; Hunter, 1987.) "We," Euro-American, conservative males, are God-fearing, hard-working, responsible, moral, strong, worthy. "They," African-Americans (and, to a lesser extent, females) are reprobate, lazy, shiftless, licentious, weak, undeserving. "They" are the source of problems. "They" need to be controlled.

Ironically, Ford's efforts to establish control of students through corporal punishment contradicts the realization of hegemony in the school. Since paddling is a form of coercion, it can not achieve hegemony; it results, instead, in domination (see Gramsci, 1973). When individuals of subordinate groups

experience mistreatment and domination at the hands of representatives of the dominant group, it becomes more difficult to obtain their consent (Femia, 1981). The use of force to gain control actually prevents the establishment of an ideological bond between Ford as the representative of the dominant group and students from subordinate groups.

Herein lies the central contradiction of Leonard Ford's principalship and perhaps in the role of schooling in our complex society. In order to maintain its superiority the dominant group demands the maintenance of ideological distance between the dominant and subordinant groups. Yet, hegemony requires an ideological bond between the dominant and subordinate groups. The establishment of such a bond requires mobility and assimilation of members of subordinate groups into the dominant group. The principal and school cannot simultaneously accomplish ideological distancing and ideological bonding.

Ford believed his actions in the school would lead to social mobility and the assimilation of many of his students. He saw the paddle and pencil as instruments to "help students get ahead."

Although awarding good-news pencils was helpful in achieving hegemony, Ford contradicted the hegemonic power of the pencil by linking it with his "other piece of wood," the paddle. Both the paddle and the pencil, then, served as implements of ideological

distancing (see Apple, 1989). The paddle and the pencil were symbols that contradicted realization of hegemony by maintaining ideological distance between principal and students, between dominant and subordinate groups. Whenever he bestowed a pencil or wielded the paddle, Ford simultaneously reinforced the students' feeling of dependence, subordination and impotence and strengthened his own sense of control, authority and power.

The paddle and the pencil were not only symbols to students of Leonard Ford's control over them. To Ford they were icons faithfully representing the image of the principal that the ideology of the dominant group he represented compelled him to become.

When Leonard Ford held the paddle and the pencil in his strong hands, they felt comfortable, natural. The two pieces of wood had essentially become extensions of himself: cool, smooth, rigid, potent.

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